

Selectmen Hear 'Wright' Suggestions

By SUSANNA SHEEHAN

The historic Wright Building on St. George St. could house a student union as well as a new town archives and even have space left over to rent out, possibly for art instruction.

These are the findings of the architects hired by the town to study the former library building's condition, figure out how to make it handicapped accessible and explore how to reuse it. Annual Town Meeting 2003 approved \$50,000 for such a

study. Special town meeting on June 14 will consider two articles on the Wright building, one for Community Preservation Act funds for construction drawings, another to designate its use.

Ron Roberage of Finegold Alexander and Associates, Inc. presented four different floor plans showing these three uses occupying different areas of the building. In all four plans, the old front section, which dates back to 1907, would serve as archives for town materials and possi-

continued on page 9

Wednesday, May 12, 2004

Duxbury Clipper

continued from front page

ble private collections, such as those from the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society. The modern back half, built in 1967, would contain a student union and rental space in the rear. Roberage said an organization such as the South Shore Conservatory could rent this area for art classes. The basement would be shared by the archives and the student union and would contain the building's heating and cooling systems and other mechanicals.

The four floor plans varied in that more space was given to the student union and less reserved for tenant space. In all four schemes, the town archive was shown to be 2,235 square feet with an occupancy of 20 people. This front area would house a reading room, archive, art display, administration, museum storage and regular storage. The student union space grew from 3,347 square feet in the first plan to 4,080 square feet in the fourth plan. The student union occupancy rate varied from 193 in the first plan to 268 in the fourth plan. There is one plan that shows two tenant spaces. The other three drawings show one rental space that can vary in square footage from 491 to 610 to 1234, depending on how large the student union becomes.

Three of the four plans show a shared lobby between the archives and the student union. This space would serve as a buffer between the two uses. Roberage said the student union looks like an open area on the plans because he was not give specific uses for the area but that putting in walls or partitions was easily done.

The building has six different levels and to make it handicapped accessible, Roberage showed an elevator near the side entrance, which used to be the public access for the old library. This entrance would still be the way in to the building but the

large handicapped ramp would be rebuilt. The front entry would not be used, because to create a usable drop-off area would destroy too many trees, said Roberage. The elevator would be used by all occupants. The mezzanine area, which could not be reached by the elevator, could be taken out of public use and used for storage, said Roberage.

Roberage said the 1907 building, which was designed by architect Joseph Everett Chandler, is in "very good shape." Minor repairs are needed to various exterior areas: the front steps need reconstruction, there is a small hole causing the foundation to leak, and there are some broken basement windows. Also, the mortar between the bricks needs re-pointing on 30 percent of the building, but the main windows are fine and the copper roof is in good condition, said Roberage.

The interior also needs some minor repairs to some of the more important elements. The oculus window in the domed roof needs to be reset and cleaned and the tile mosaic in the front entry way needs some repair. The marble fireplace surround is fine as are the floors. The original lighting and clock need to be restored and the whole interi-

or needs painting, Roberage said.

The 1967 section was designed by Moorehouse, Chesney and Thomas, in the modernist style that was popular in the 1960s, and is also in good shape, said Roberage. It also needs minor exterior repairs such as a new roof and re-pointing. The metal windows could be replaced at some point, Roberage said.

Roberage said the parking lot for approximately 20 cars is in good condition. He suggested adding outside lighting to make the parking lot safer and to illuminate the building at night.

Debbie Bowen of the Student Union said the proposal would work for the number of students expected to use the building. Attendance at student union events has ranged from 200 to 250, she said.

"The numbers look fairly comfortable," Bowen said.

Town Historian Katherine Pillsbury wondered if there would be enough separation between the archives and the student union. Roberage said the scenarios that show a shared lobby provide enough buffer space. The walls between the two areas would be insulated for noise reduction. Also, the operating hours would differ between the archives and the youth center.